

New Canada dollar has a loony history

By Roger Boye

Canada's new dollar coin will depict a loon—rather than two canoeists as had been planned—due to the freak loss of two master coin dies.

Officials say the dies disappeared in November during shipment from the capital in Ottawa to a coin production plant in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

"It's highly unlikely anyone could use those dies to make coins, but we changed the design anyway; we just didn't want to take a chance," said Murray Church, the Royal Canadian Mint's communications director.

Government personnel shipped the dies via a private courier, Church said, but the dollar dies were either mislaid or stolen from the courier.

The dollar now is to depict Queen Elizabeth II on one side and a loon—a bird indigenous to Canada—on the other. Mint executives hope the coin will circulate throughout Canada and replace the paper dollar bill by the early 1990s.

The new dollars will be introduced into circulation next July.

Despite the embarrassment, officials are pleased with the "loon coin." "We're sorry about this misfortune," Church said. "But the new design has been greeted with much enthusiasm, and it's wonderful to see the coin blessed."

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A Founding Father signing the U.S. Constitution is part of the design depicted on a 1987 medal issued by the U.S. Capitol Historical Society, a non-profit organization chartered by Congress.

Part of the money from sales of the medal will support programs commemorating the 1987 Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution.

Medal prices range from \$8 for a 1½-inch antique bronze specimen to \$250 for a 3-inch sterling silver medal and \$575 for a 1 5/16-inch specimen made with 18-karat gold.

For more information write the U.S. Capitol Historical Society, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002.